

# **Washington County**

**August 3, 2005**

**7:00 – 9:00 PM**

## **#1 Concern about sustaining Agriculture in Maryland**

### **1. Profitability**

Value added – Access to local markets – county regulations

Lower % on mortgages for farms (8% is robbery)

Health care insurance

Education of public about farming methods and importance to the community well being.

Taxes – being able to pass a farm on to the next generation.

State and County Government need to provide legislation where necessary and funding

Taxes

Funding programs and mandates

Land preservation

- 1) pay better prices for preservation of farmland
- 2) be competitive with developer

Estate taxes – death tax

Insurance – pay part of premiums

The absolute necessity to find funding sources to help farmers implement management practices that protect water quality and for those funds to not come out of the farmer's pocket!

All the institutions that are designed to help agriculture (University Extension, MDA) are being down sized and defunded.

We need research, innovation, and information.

Land availability for as including equity preservation and capital appreciation and many more.

Fund and support for MDA turf and seed division.

## **2. Land Use and Management**

Being able to obtain farm land needed to allow for next generation to enter operation which means to expand from “one” to family partnership of several.

Farm preservation, need state money for farm easements.

Zoning to manage urban sprawl.

Improve farm practices to preserve clear water!

Preservation of our prime agriculture soils.

Our county commissioners by passing the present zoning regulations are fragmenting our prime ag zones by requiring five (5) acres lots and requiring 20 and 30 acres per lot in nearly all of the total acres in the conservation and environmental zones.

There is a shortage of farm land in the area.

Farmers are looking to purchase farm land are willing to compete with development prices.

In order to purchase land the farmer needs land preservation funds to help offset the cost to purchase land.

Counties and states must dramatically increase land preservation funds so farmers can purchase land at \$10-\$12,000 per acre and then receive \$5,000-\$7,000 acres for a land preservation easement.

Preserving prime farm land (developing our best soils).

Public relations: impacts preservation, land use, markets environmental and planning & zoning regulations, agriculture tourism.

Farm land preservation funding.

Protecting large blocks or contiguous farm land.

Water usage and quality more funding for cover crops and stream buffers.

Development pressures and the governmental policies that add to the pressures. (example of policy: Nutrient loading limits placed on counties by MDE for their sewer systems (result of EPA Mandates). This give us limited sewer to encourage growth in urban growth areas and makes it difficult to develop effective TDR Plan).

Maryland state assistance not hiding

Stop the harsh “you must” attitude from within Washington County zoning office.

Tell us (farmers) a list of what is available.

Really tired of searching

Most Washington County offices seem to hold/have a palatable disdain when asked questions about farm policy.

Comprehensive approach to land use

Stop squandering our best agriculture land for short term economic gains.

Once land is in houses, it uses up more dollars than it contributes and this does not generate long-term sustainable economic rent which farming does.

Shrinking good agricultural land and high cost of production of agriculture products.

### **3. Value Added Opportunities**

Connecting directly with seven (7) million of the most affluent consumers in the world. I want 100% of their food dollars not 5%.

Farmers have no control of prices received for their products.

Why was parity eliminated?

### **4. Bio-Security**

Need to provide education to public

Need to staff labs and extension

Need to have food safe steps

### **5. New Ideas**

Insufficient agriculture education in schools and communities